



Media Fairness Initiative

A Look at Bias in the News



Good News in Iraq Brings Less Coverage

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The last six months have seen a substantial reduction in insurgent attacks and U.S. casualties in Iraq. However, as the news in Iraq has improved, the amount of coverage has plunged.

For example, a Media Research Center (MRC) analysis found that **the amount of network news stories on Iraq has declined every month since September, as increased troop levels reduced violence.**

A separate survey by the Project for Excellence in Journalism (PEJ) found a similar plunge in news coverage. PEJ's survey found a significant drop in overall news coverage of the Iraq War since the beginning of last year. **In January 2007, for example, about 25 percent of all news stories focused on Iraq. So far this year, that percentage has dropped to the low single digits (see graph).**



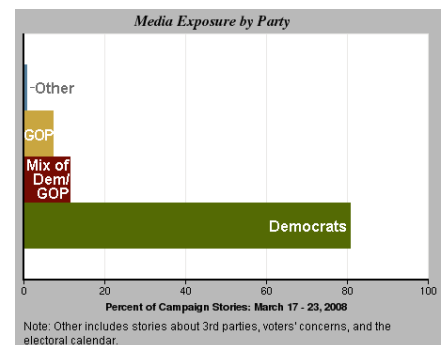
PEJ's commentary on the drop in coverage noted that "...some have criticized journalists for not producing other stories that would paint a richer portrait of life, and perhaps progress, in Iraq."

Democrats Dominate Weekly Coverage

Despite his high-profile trip to the Middle East, presumptive GOP nominee John McCain registered at only 17 percent of the campaign coverage for the week of March 17-23, and **Democrats generated almost 12 times the media attention as Republicans (see graph).**

Sen. Barack Obama was a significant or dominant figure in 72 percent of the week's campaign coverage, while Sen. Hillary Clinton was at 30 percent.

PEJ has found McCain trailing both Obama and Clinton in news coverage in all but two of its weekly analyses this year.



Networks Show Bias in Party Affiliation

The big three broadcast networks have largely avoided mentioning the party affiliation of Democrats recently embroiled in scandals, while Republicans are consistently identified, according to a Media Research Center (MRC) analysis.

The MRC survey of 15 ABC, CBS and NBC morning and evening news shows found that former New York Governor Eliot Spitzer was referred to as a Democrat just 20 percent of the time.

In contrast, Republican Senators charged with ethical lapses were labeled Republican on every show (100 percent) MRC examined.